



MEDIA RELEASE

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Analysis Shows Community Care Team Improves Lives and Decreases Hospital Readmissions of Chronically Ill Patients

Behavioral Health Component Added to Help Those at Highest Risk

Columbia, MD – A recently completed health-care analysis concluded a pilot program of the Howard County Health Department has reduced the number of preventable hospitalizations by patients with multiple chronic health conditions, potentially saving hundreds of thousands of dollars each year in health care costs.

Columbia-based IMPAQ International, a social science research firm, conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the Community Care Team (CCT) pilot program after its first year. After examining the program's objectives and achievements, the assessment concluded that the CCT intervention method was effective.

"This focused, innovative approach helps patients manage their illnesses and avoid hospitalizations," said Dr. Maura J. Rossman, Howard County Health Officer. "The evaluation shows promising results for the chronically ill and a reduction in the high cost of care, creating new opportunities to invest in other health initiatives."

IMPAQ International's findings for the program's first-year include:

- 52 percent of participants had no readmissions to the hospital after 60 days.
- For the 48 percent of clients who were readmitted to the hospital after 60 days, their length of stay was decreased by 50 percent.

IMPAQ's Health Division Vice President Tina Barretto said, "IMPAQ is committed to contributing to the welfare of Howard County residents. We were glad to find evidence of a positive impact that the Community Care Team is making in the lives of the County's most vulnerable."

The CCT, managed by Heathy Howard, Inc., connects patients, in various units at Howard County General Hospital, with a nurse and community health worker who help find the resources needed for patients to manage their illnesses and prevent further hospitalizations. Liddy Garcia-Buñuel, Executive Director of Heathy Howard, commented, "The team is an amazing group of dedicated professionals who see every day that they are making a difference providing support to patients in the community after discharge from the hospital."

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Under the FY 2016 Operating Budget submitted by County Executive Allan H. Kittleman and recently approved by the County Council, a behavioral health specialist will be added to the CCT to address growing behavioral health needs in the community.

"I'm pleased we were able to fund this additional position, given that current research indicates mental health issues frequently compound the problems of chronically ill patients," Kittleman said.

"With the addition of the behavioral health specialist, we anticipate the success of the Community Care Team will be even greater."

The Horizon Foundation was a key partner in the creation of the care teams and applauds these early indicators of success. "We are excited by the results of this analysis of the Community Care Team program," said Nicolette Highsmith Vernick, President and CEO of the Horizon Foundation. "Through this unique partnership and data-driven approach, we can continue to improve health care delivery and, more importantly, the health and lives of our residents."

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